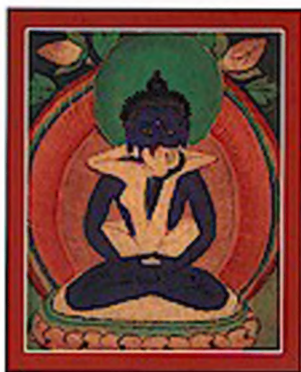
Mañjuśrīmitra

Primordial Experience

An Introduction to rDzogs-chen Meditation



Translated by Namkhai Norbu and Kennard Lipman

Primordial Experience

AN INTRODUCTION TO rDZOGS-CHEN MEDITATION

Mañjuśrīmitra

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TO OUR TEACHERS

The Verses

Cultivating the Primordial State of Pure and Total Presence

To the Joyful One, (who has fully grasped) that there is nothing that makes both (persons and phenomena) what they are, who has acquired ever-fresh awareness untainted by concepts, and primordial contact with the total field of events and meanings;
To the quiet nature of everything, the supreme path in which there is nothing to accept or reject;
To those who are one with all the Victorious Ones (and possess) the ten powers, such as never turning back;
To the very sameness of these three places of refuge, I very confidently dedicate myself, without conceptualizing (this sameness). [1–4]

(The state of pure and total presence) is equally praised by all Teachers who have been the light of the world,
As the energy-pulse itself of the youthful Mañjuśri, who is the energy-pulse of all reality;
As the mother of all the Joyful Ones, the one path of all the Victorious Ones;
And as the basis of the ocean of ways, such as ethical conduct, to overcome limitations. [5–8]

The specific benefit of having developed ongoing and utmost pure and total presence is that,

When a perceptive person has made this noble pure and total presence real,
It is then what the Victorious Ones have spoken of as "primordial contact with the total field of events and meanings," most excellent of the three forms of primordial contact with reality.
It is also called the "eye of discernment" because of the excellence of its knowing capacity.
Nonconceptual, ever-fresh awareness, supreme and indestructible, is, moreover, also this very (state of pure and total presence). [9–13]

Since all that can be said to be an aspect of the state of freedom of any of the Noble Ones
Comes about through the state of pure and total presence reaching its fullness, these capacities arise from that.
Also, all those heroically committed to the state of pure and total presence, belonging to the deathless, great, noble lineage,
Could not come into being if this [pure and total presence] did not exist. Therefore, it is the very path of supreme freedom. [14–17]

How ought one, then, to cultivate this ever-present state of commitment to what is indestructible?
This path of all the great seers that is subtle and difficult to understand, is beyond thought and no-thought.
It is divorced from verbal conventions in its being difficult to point out and inquire into—
Thus it is not arrived at by words and is not in the realm of experiences of ordinary people and those apart from (the supreme, comprehensive approach to the teachings). [18–21]

Although this is so, in this case one should look into the matter by means of the oral instructions of the masters and the definitive words of the Teacher.

From a logical basis in direct perception, etc., one thinks about entities within the limited conceptions of affirmation and denial;
But the very (thought) that follows in the wake of the continual grasping of experience by thought, having affirmed something as a valid means of knowledge, is itself then contradicted by the mind.
Since the grasping of experience by thought does not itself exist as something within our limiting conceptions, there is no limiting conception to be thought about. If there is nothing to this (grasping by thought), what valid means of knowledge can there be?
Therefore, the conventional ways of inquiring into things by worldly people are not necessary on this yogic path. [22–26]

Here, one should inquire into this path starting from the characteristics that are the logical basis of our limited conception: "an entity."
This reality, known as that which is present internally and externally in the experience of all living beings,
Is not as it is seen and intended by the six forms of apprehension, but is deceptive.
If that which is apprehended while intoxicated by one's own grasping of experience by thought, was valid,
It would then be reasonable to say that these (sentient beings) would be free, just like those who have overcome emotional conflicts, who think, "there are no entities."
From the fact that these (sentient beings) are tormented by frustration and crushed by the enemy, time, it is evident that they are deceived.
Otherwise, if that which is known through the sense fields were a valid means of knowledge,
Then, this being so, who would have a need for the noble path?

The path (of ordinary perception) is taught as the path of freedom, although one is not freed through sense perception.
Such perceptually based awareness, which does not remove any frustration, is the birthplace of that which muddies the stream of awareness.
Therefore, it has been stated by the Victorious Ones that it is evident that what is perceived by sentient beings is deceptive. [27–37]

Then, how do these (appearances) make themselves felt due to deception?
(One's potentiality for experience), which always and everywhere tries to grasp experience through thought, is automatically enfeebled by this grasping.
Since one's mental clarity, becoming deluded, has come under the power of lack of awareness acting as a conditioning factor,
The general forms and specific details of experiencing appear as if existing-in-themselves, according to the three phrases (of experience discussed below).
Through the accumulation of habituating tendencies (engendered by) the various aspects of being caught up in a situation, when the power of that habituation has grown,
The potential for experience itself appears in a manner similar to that of the body and objects, as in the case of (a meditation in which) bones appear everywhere.
The self, which is imagined by thought when it objectifies the continuing stream of accumulating tendencies, does not exist.
By the power of being caught up in experiences, the fundamental structuring of all experiencing has been obscured and so this subtle (foundation) is not seen. From this specific perceptions arise. [38–45]

Through the power of the potential for experience together with its continuing activity, one loses a profound comprehension (of how things appear) and, following in the wake of trying to grasp experience through thought,
Concepts of "self" and "entities" proliferate due to this grasping, which is by nature unstable.
By not seeing this very subtle movement (of the fundamental structuring of all experience) that has arisen possessing (the habituating tendencies), the various philosophical views of the Hindus, such as that of the self, arise and are held to be liberating.
Once the potential for experiencing has provided the site for limitless actions, the duration of the habituating tendencies is endless and indeterminable,
While the conditions for the awakening and growth of the habituating tendencies are various.
Although, through the maturation of (previously accumulated) tendencies due to the appropriate conditions, a human body appears,
When other conditions awaken other tendencies, (there can be another form of life). Seeing the power of this process of change,
It is claimed that this is done by Śiva, etc. But that path does not alleviate (suffering) or lead to liberation.
The enfeeblement of the yogic path as well as the source of doubt arise from the lack of a profound grasp of this subtle continuity [of the fundamental structuring of all experience]. [46–55]

By imagining a self, one has completely obscured (one's own existence) and been divorced from the lineage of the Noble Ones.
By imagining entities, a variety of frustrations arises, and so one will be reborn in the lower realms. [56–57]

Since perception, moreover, seizes on different identifiable qualities out of the spectrum of conditioned events,
It appears as eightfold due to these specific activities, although it is not manifold in its essential function. [58–59]

Therefore, in the first moment of experience, one's body and all configurations of events and meanings are present.
On account of thinking about and becoming obsessed with something, in a later (moment) that (thought) that has arisen (in accord with the earlier moment) makes itself felt. [60–61]

Nothing exists for ordinary people and Noble Ones apart from the continuum of their own experiencing.
This variety (of experience) that exists for the six types of sentient beings (appears) through their own habitual mode of vision.
Since this continuum of experiencing is without any boundaries, (to call it) "one" is (also) without foundation.
Since that has no boundaries, all the limitless Buddha-fields are one's own body.
In that one's own body appears as the body of living beings and as limitless Buddha-fields, it is also difficult to postulate that the potential for experiencing and the habituating tendencies are either one or diverse. [62–67]

(One says), "all these (configurations of events and meanings) come about and disappear according to dependent origination." But, like a burnt seed, since a nonexistent (result) does not come about from a nonexistent (cause), cause and effect do not exist.

Being obsessed with entities, one's experiencing itself, which discriminates each cause and effect, appears as if it were cause and condition. [68–71A]

Since these two (cause and effect) do not exist, origination and cessation do not exist.
Since origination and cessation do not exist, self and other do not exist. Since there is no transformation and death, eternity and annihilation do not exist.
Therefore, it is evident that deceptive samsara as well as nirvana do not exist. [71b–73]

The momentary site (i.e., the fundamental structuring) is never separate (from the habituating tendencies). They are really the same phenomenon and (if one) does not exist, (the other) does not exist.
Since they are produced by trying to grasp experience with thought, which is completely mistaken, the habituating tendencies do not exist and,
Since there then does not exist a sphere of operation (for the fundamental structuring), the fundamental structuring of all experience as well as perceptual and cognitive activities do not exist.
Since boundaries do not exist (in experience), an objective support or a site (for its operation) do not exist. How then can perceptual and cognitive activities arise?
Therefore, experiencing is beyond the limiting conceptions of existence and nonexistence, and is neither a unity nor a plurality. [74–78]

Since the state of pure and total presence of the Joyful One does not exist, it is a magical apparition of that [state] that appears to those who are deluded. [79]

In the same way, although these pure forms of ever-fresh awareness, (inseparable from) the total field of events and meanings and the continuity of wholly

positive actions (connected with it), are imagined to come about (in time) and be objectifiable,
Since there is no causal basis for vajra-like (ever-fresh awareness), (our potential for experience, as causal basis, and ever-fresh awareness, as result) are alike regarding this similar condition (of nonexistence). And,
Since these supreme forms of vajra-like (ever-fresh awareness) that (thoroughly grasp) the total field of events and meanings are without boundaries, they are not momentary events. [80–83]

Since the source of pure, positive qualities is nonexistent like a reflection, ever-fresh awareness that deals with mundane matters does not exist. [84]

Therefore, since what we define as "pure and total presence" and "lack of pure and total presence" are one in not existing, there is nothing to accept or reject.
In this sense, then, the terms for the ultimate, such as *nonexistence of origination and cessation*, *fundamental alikeness*, *nonduality*, *beyond thought*, *openness*, *the total field of events and meanings*, *beyond conventional designations and language*, are all conventional designations. When the ultimate does not exist, then the state of a pervasive lack of clarity does not exist.
Saying that something ultimately is the case, is itself the state of a pervasive lack of clarity. [85–89]

One should not remain in a state wherein there is no doubt, nor eleminate a state of doubt.
Since there is no meditator and no total field of events and meanings (as object of meditation), there is neither doubt nor genuine insight. [90–91]

Since, if one inquires into our limiting conception "entities," they are (found to be) nonexistent even as regards their apparitional nature,

Then even this nonexistence, which is dependent upon existence, is nonexistent. Also, the nonexistence of this nonexistence does not exist.
Since the limiting concepts do not exist, the middle (between these) does not exist. One does not remain even in a "middle". [92–94]

Just as the "Lotus-like Lord" of everything worldly does not reject anything, (all things) are seen as alike and present in utter sameness.
This very seeing as deceptive that which (is fundamentally not deceptive), is to be understood as deception.
Even the teachings of the six (Hindu schools) and the deeds of the Lord of limitations are not rejected and regarded as negative.
Since even engaging in skillful action and discernment do not exist, engaging in them is like the [activity] of the Lord of limitations.
Having become proud through taking one's understanding as the best, superior to all, attachment and aversion arise, from which arguments come about. This is lack of awareness. The real point is not seen. [95–100]

As long as there is the agitated movement of the mind, there is the realm of the Lord of limitations. [This practice of pure and total presence] is a subtle path, in which one does not remain even in the states of the absence of movement of thought or of nonmovement. This middle path in which there is no deceptive appearance has been called the "primordial state of pure and total presence" by the Awakened Ones. [101–103]

Having eliminated holding on to form, identifiable characteristics, and wishfulness, while cultivating the three "gateways to freedom," is the activity of

the Lord of limitations. Form (itself) is open-dimensional.
Eliminating the three paths of samsara while cultivating nirvana is also the activity of the Lord of limitations. This (kind of cultivation) is not the quiet nature of everything. There is not any (samsara) eliminated or actual state (of nirvana) sought.
Nirvana and so forth, the status (reached) and realm of vision of all the Noble Ones, do not exist apart from this very path. [104–108]

When (a thought) arises one does not eliminate it, nor does one construct a support for the mind when no (thought) arises.
(Even if) there stirs the slightest (thought) that is not (the dimension of knowledge called) Mañjuśrī, this itself is still that (dimension of knowledge). But one does not try to remain in that.
Since one cannot obtain a foundation for meditation, one will not obtain any result by meditation.
Grasping experience through thought, which is the sphere of operation of our "mind," is itself the ultimate content of what is.
Since one is free from (seizing on) perceptible qualities, there does not exist anything that is better or worse. This supreme path is to be cultivated.
Since neither do conditioned events arise (on their own) nor do all configurations of events and meanings come about (dependently), all these are taken beyond the realm of frustration and suffering.
When (one has thoroughly grasped that) there are no "entities," everything then (arises) as the total field of events and meanings—understanding this is the supreme state of those who have overcome emotional conflicts.
Space is unobjectifiable and is a mere name. That which is positive for an individual and that which is negative, being indivisible, do not arise. [109–116]

The mind is not engaged in seeking nor is it directed towards anything. One is free from knowing and not knowing.
There is neither picking out nor attending to (aids to meditation). Delight in acceptance and rejection are alike in not existing. Not objectifying (anything), and
Remaining with the (understanding of) this alikeness, there is no creation of duality; one is beyond the realm of speech; there is neither activity nor inactivity; there is no accumulation (of merit) or diminution (of faults), etc. [117–119]

One's mind is not engaged in seeking anything. One is not disturbed by anything, knowing the fundamental alikeness (of everything); and
There is no fear of intoxication by objects or attachment to anything. One does not avoid nor dwell on (anything).
The ways of overcoming (limitations), the facets (of pure and total presence), the four forms of ever-fresh awareness of the alikeness (of everything), which are undisturbed (by negative conditions), are known in this (practice).
Cultivating the all-encompassing field of experience (is) this path; if one has cultivated otherwise, the transparent clarity (of the field) will not come about. [120–123]

To really get (the meaning) through symbolic means is also "pure and total presence": so has the Teacher proclaimed.
(The symbolic means) are here the foundation for the activation and cultivation of pure and total presence itself.
Having made use of the three "symbolic encounters" that are indicative of (facets of the existence of an Awakened One), and made firm the three contemplations,

Primordial experience itself is activated in the "symbolic encounter with the ultimate content of what is." One should visualize and recite the heart-mantra (of the divinity that represents that).
[124–127]

By this "cultivation of the commitment to what is indestructible" all paths are unerringly cultivated.
If anything positive for the individual, whatever it may be, has not been taken up by the way of acting (symbolized by) Samantabhadrī,
Then the way of acting (symbolized by) Samantabhadra becomes the activity of the Lord of limitations—in which case it will reach its limit and be exhausted.
On the path that possesses this (primordial state of pure and total presence), even the activity of the Lord of limitations is said to be the activity of this pure and total presence. [128–131]

Intense interest in the meaning of this, moreover, has been praised by the Victorious One as "great, pure and total presence."
By the mere activation of this source, the Awakened One has proclaimed, one will overcome the (limitations represented by) the host of the Lord of limitations, as well as the Śrāvakas, who are the object of veneration of the triple world and its rulers.
The greatest skillful action is this hidden activity of those committed to pure and total presence.
If this (state of pure and total presence) did not exist, the Victorious One could not make his appearance, and it would then be impossible that the three approaches to the teaching be taught.
In a mere instant, by the power of trusting confidence, moreover, one quickly becomes the youthful Mañjuśrī.
Also, while the supreme commitments of the supreme, comprehensive approach to the teachings are kept and the hidden dimensions of existence entered, all commitments and ethical behavior are protected and (those committed to pure and total presence) greatly praised as a noble object for offerings.
If the merit of the state of pure and total presence had form, even the extent of space would be too small a container for it, the Victorious Ones have equally proclaimed. [132–141]

Individual beings have been born, are being born, and will be born in various forms of life, and thus have come under the power of the stream of birth.
Through not understanding what the grasping of experience through thought ultimately is, one is deceived by this grasping. The stream of thought continues, and so there is no (opportunity) to turn away from deluded thought later on.
The illusory beings who are deceived by illusions such as an illusory elephant, by those who are skilled in the art of illusion, also lose their dreamlike happiness, just as when one is deceived by a dream (into thinking it is real). Since those who have come under the power of dreams
Reject this path and look to other paths that are extreme, and teach (that) as what they call the "unerring path," they are fit for a compassionate (response). They are like those who say stone is gold. The compassion of the compassionate ones (is spontaneous), their minds being conditioned by commiseration.
These sentient beings who suffer because of the temporal circumstances and do not exercise (discernment) during these last 500 years of the teaching,
Have difficulty understanding the pure teaching, and going by mere words, do not (understand it) properly.

The various points of view (that result) are confirmed according to each one's own capacity, etc. One is stirred up by this river of misunderstanding and separated from the yogic ambrosia that is the vital essence of the teaching. [142–151]

Therefore, although this noble hidden dimension of primordial experiencing, the excellent path taught by the Victorious Ones,
Is the extra-ordinary sphere of operation of the primordial experience of all the Victorious Ones,
I have validated (it for myself) by virtue of (long) experience and noncontradictory valid means of knowledge.
By composing this (work) on the excellent path of nonduality for the sake of sentient beings,
May, in a single moment, in all the places of birth of sentient beings,
Obstacles decrease and this primordial experience of all the Victorious Ones spread. [152–157]

The Commentary

CULTIVATING THE PRIMORDIAL STATE OF PURE AND TOTAL PRESENCE DISCUSSED UNDER TWELVE HEADINGS

HOMAGE TO THE THREE JEWELS!

Cultivating the Primordial State of Pure and Total Presence can be discussed under twelve headings:

1. Gesture of respect
2. Why (the primordial state) should be fully grasped
3. What should be fully grasped
4. How it can be fully grasped
5. What has to be inquired into to fully grasp (the primordial state)
6. Pointing out the real meaning[1] (grasped) after inquiring into (the above)
7. Putting the real meaning into practice
8. Special methods taught for fully grasping the real meaning
9. Pointing out that without taking hold of the primordial state of pure and total presence, freedom will not be obtained and positive qualities will come to an end
10. Pointing out that even the arousal of mere intense interest (in the primordial state) leads to many abilities
11. Pointing out that those who have gone wrong are the object of compassion
12. Dedication for (the sake of creating) a foundation of positive qualities

1. The gesture of respect is made three times, once to the Awakened One, once to the Teaching, and once to the Community. The teacher Mañjuśrīmitra begins his text with this gesture, shown in the first verse, in order to avoid and finally overcome obstacles. The gesture of respect to the Awakened One is shown by the line,

> To the Joyful One, (who has fully grasped) that there is nothing that makes both (persons and phenomena) what they are, who has acquired ever-fresh awareness untainted by concepts, and primordial contact with the total field of events and meanings; [1]

The full grasp, without mistakes, that there is nothing that makes both persons and phenomena what they are, is itself the ever-fresh awareness of the Joyful One, untainted by concepts. Obtaining this fresh awareness, one acquires its domain, the total field of events and meanings, as well as the primordial contact inseparable from that domain.

The gesture of respect to the Teaching is,

> To the quiet nature of everything, the supreme path in which there is nothing to accept or reject; [2]

In the actual condition of all that which muddies the stream of awareness, as well as its purification, the (proliferation) of all such characterizations by the discursive mind ceases. In this there are no positive qualities to acquire and no faults to remove. (This) absence of acceptance and rejection is supreme among paths of freedom.

The gesture of respect to the Community is

> To those who are one with all the Victorious Ones (and possess) the ten powers, such as never turning back; [3]

Those who are heroically committed to pure and total presence, residing on the ten spiritual levels, do not fall back into samsara upon (attaining) the first level, do not fall back into (seizing on) identifiable characteristics upon (attaining) the eighth, etc.[2] (They possess) the powers over life, action, material goods, etc.[3] Those who obtain these ten powers are one

with all the Victorious Ones by virtue of their unity with the full grasp of the total field of events and meanings.

> To the very sameness of these three places of refuge, I very confidently dedicate myself, without conceptualizing (this sameness). [4]

The place of refuge is the three jewels. The ultimate content of what is, is the unerring path. This is what is to be known; the Awakened Ones and those heroically committed to Awakening are those who know this. Since (here) there is what is called the "nondistinction between knowing and what is known," (one speaks of) "fundamental alikeness"; and since ultimately there is nonduality, (one also speaks of) "fundamental alikeness." In this regard, through a dedication that adheres to, with certainty, reality as it is, and through the pure confidence of a mind that is not attached to its ways of characterizing things, the gesture of respect is made.

2. If one asks, why should the primordial state of pure and total presence be fully grasped?, the answer is: on account of its great benefit. This benefit, further, has three aspects: (a) its beneficial existence as the motivating cause (of freedom); (b) its benefit as the specific goal that is fully grasped; and (c) pointing out that it is the supreme basis, as well as path, of all the fruits of freedom.

a. Of these, the beneficial existence as motivating cause is spoken of as follows:

> (The primordial state) is equally praised by all Teachers who have been the light of the world, [5]

and so forth. All teachers of gods and men, who have become the light of ever-fresh awareness that clears away the inner and outer darkness of the world, equally and similarly praise the primordial state of pure and total presence as being of great benefit. If one asks how they praise it, the answer is:

> As the energy-pulse itself of the youthful Mañjuśrī, who is the energy-pulse of all reality; [6]

In this case, whether or not "those who have come through" visit (our reality), the ultimate content of what is, the energy-pulse of all that is, present since the very beginning, is what we call the "youthful Mañjuśrī." Why is he called "gentle," etc.?[4] He is gentle because there is no irritation, and realizing this, one becomes Lord of all beings. "Youthful" has the meaning of pure, since he is not tainted by faults and impurities. "Energy-pulse" is mentioned above since it is the energy-pulse of all reality. "Mañjuśrī" is the unerring thorough comprehension that is the defining characteristic of the primordial state of pure and total presence, since it is the birthplace of all Awakened Ones.

> As the mother of all the Joyful Ones, the one path of all the Victorious Ones; [7]

is stated because, if one has not understood this path, one won't become an Awakened One by another path.

> And as the basis of the ocean of ways, such as ethical conduct, to overcome (limitations). [8]

If one has not taken hold of the ten ways of overcoming (limitations), such as ethical conduct, etc., as well as other wholesome activities, with this primordial state, then the accumulation (of merit) that leads to the state of an Awakened One has not been accomplished. Thus, it is also shown that (the primordial state) is the basis of all the merits accumulated for the sake of reaching the state of an Awakened One.

b. Pointing out the distinguishing superiority (of the primordial state) also at the time of the goal, i.e., when it is made really so, is as follows:

> The specific benefit of having developed ongoing and utmost pure and total presence is that, [9]

When one has cultivated unerringly, in actuality and in its ongoingness, the primordial state of pure and total presence that is pure delight, so that it is really so, what are the specific abilities which are obtained? The answer is:

> When a perceptive person has made this noble pure and total presence real,
> It is then what the Victorious Ones have spoken of as "primordial contact with the total field of events and meanings," most excellent of the three forms of primordial contact with reality. [10–11]

When those who possess a discerning mind make this primordial experience of pure and total presence really so, the primordial state is then called "primordial contact with the total field of events and meanings," which is the most excellent among the three forms of primordial contact, such as "primordial contact with total richness and all its satisfactions."[5] Since this primordial state of pure and total presence, which is the basis of all that is positive and of all capacities, is primordial contact with the total field of events and meanings, it is most excellent.

> It is also called the "eye of discernment" because of the excellence of its knowing capacity. [12]

Among all the means of knowing, the most noble is the "eye of discernment." Why? Since among all objects of knowledge, the ultimate content of what is, which is the energy-pulse of all that is, is the most worthy, so also the means of knowing that thoroughly grasps this is called "worthy." Also, among the five types of "eyes"[6] such as the physical eye and the "eye of the gods," the "eye of discernment," which by definition makes the primordial state of pure and total presence a reality, is supreme.

> Nonconceptual, ever-fresh awareness, supreme and indestructible, is, moreover, also this very (state of pure and total presence). [13]

A vajra is hard and can cut (anything). It is (called) "hard," because it is not broken by any contrary substance; and since it eliminates, i.e., cuts through, all obscuring elements, it is referred to as ever-fresh awareness. Since it is the pinnacle, i.e., supreme, among the four forms of ever-fresh awareness,[7]

such as the discriminating ever-fresh awareness, the all-accomplishing ever-fresh awareness, etc., it is (called) non-conceptual ever-fresh awareness. Moreover, the making real of the primordial state of pure and total presence is just this.

c. Pointing out (this primordial state) as the supreme basis, as well as path, of all the fruits of freedom, is shown by the following:

> Since all that can be said to be an aspect of the state of freedom of any of the Noble Ones [14]

Also, all of that which is shown to be, and reported as, the capacities that result from freedom from the three realms, such as those of the Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas,

> Comes about through the state of pure and total presence reaching its fullness, these capacities arise from that. [15]

While from the thorough grasp and fulfillment of the state of pure and total presence arises the fulfillment of one's capacities, even if one thoroughly grasps this primordial state at a low or middling level (of understanding), corresponding capacities will also arise and be obtained. Those who do not thoroughly grasp the state of pure and total presence at all, do not obtain even a minimal freedom. Therefore, since this is both the basis of all freedom and the path which accomplishes the excellent result, it is supreme among paths of freedom. If one asks why, the answer is:

> Also, all of those heroically committed to the state of pure and total presence, belonging to the deathless, great, noble lineage, [16]

Since the supreme comprehensive approach is the great goal among all the noble lineages of Śrāvakas, etc., it is called the "great lineage." Those who are intent on the great, unsurpassed state of pure and total presence are called "those who are heroically committed to pure and total presence." Even all those

> Could not come into being if this (pure and total presence) did not exist. Therefore, it is the very path of supreme freedom. [17]

If this state of pure and total presence did not exist, then, since there could not be those who are heroically committed to it, this state is most excellent among all paths to freedom.

3. If one asks, what should be fully grasped, the answer is: the primordial state of pure and total presence. Further, (the author) points out that it is not an object of inquiry, since it is beyond words and thought:

> How ought one, then, to cultivate this ever-present state of commitment to what is indestructible? [18]

The great benefit spoken of above is not destroyed anywhere or at any time. Since the thorough grasp of this cuts through the net of obscuring elements (in a person), it is (called) "vajra."[8] As regards the unerring felt knowledge of the ultimate content of our potential for experience, it is called the "state of commitment to what is indestructible" and "primordial state of pure and total presence." Due to an accidental loss of this felt knowledge, which is characteristic of our potential for experience, all that which muddies the stream of awareness is pervasively present. When "the state of commitment to what is indestructible," the actual condition of our potential for experience, is thoroughly grasped without mistake, the excellence of the fruit of freedom is present. So, by what means ought one unerringly to cultivate (this)? The answer to this question is:

> This path of all the great seers that is subtle and difficult to understand, is beyond thought and no-thought. [19]

Since it is not understood by those of undeveloped intellect or by those who are attached to their intellect, it is subtle and difficult to know. Thus, this path of the Awakened One, the great seer, which has been entered upon or is (now) at first entered upon by myself and others, is not an object of thought. Yet, since it is also not an object (called) "no-

thought," it is beyond both thought and no-thought. Therefore,

> It is divorced from verbal conventions in its being difficult to point out and inquire into— [20]

While it is difficult for the mind to inquire into (this path) and also difficult to point it out by words, what is being referred to can be shown by words. Since the words are not what is referred to, (this path) is beyond conventional designations.

> Thus it is not arrived at by words and is not in the realm of experience of ordinary people and those apart from (the supreme, comprehensive approach to the teachings). [21]

Since what is referred to is beyond verbal conventions, it is not arrived at by words. It is not an object for ordinary people and those apart from the supreme, comprehensive approach, such as the Śrāvakas. Yet, the means for understanding and knowing it do exist.

4. If the means for fully grasping (this primordial state) exist, how then can it be fully grasped? Since mistakenly trying to grasp experience through thought is not a valid means of knowledge,[9] (the author) points out what is to be fully grasped through thinking things through logically, according to the characteristics of things as they really are and to the testimony of scholars and Noble Ones, as follows:

> Although this is so, in this case one should look into the matter by means of the oral instructions of the masters and the definitive words of the Teacher. [22]

In this case, one should look into this *Cultivating the Primordial State of Pure and Total Presence* in order not to err regarding that very (experience); into the oral instructions that (come from) the unerring experience of thorough comprehension of the wise masters; and into the teachings that give the real meaning, although there have been many things taught by the Teacher (the Awakened One).

Pointing out that mistakenly grasping experience through thought is not a valid means of knowledge, is as follows:

> From a logical basis in direct perception, etc., one thinks about entities within the limited conception of affirmation and denial; [23]

From a starting point that is reasonable, such as perception, sound thinking, etc., one assigns entities either to the category of that which muddies the stream of awareness, or that which clarifies the stream of awareness. A logical analysis asks: will something finally be found to be existent or nonexistent (according to its categories)?

> But the very (thought) that follows in the wake of the continual grasping of experience by thought, having affirmed something as a valid means of knowledge, is itself then contradicted by the mind. [24]

This very analysis mentioned above, following the stream of the mistaken grasping of experience through thought, and taking as a valid object of knowledge what is wrongly seen through this mistaken grasping, is (itself) either accepted or rejected by the mind that is mistaken. For example, when one sees a rope as a snake, why, since one sees (the snake) directly, does one say that there is no snake? Because taking one's own error as a valid, direct perception is not a valid means of knowledge. If one further asks why, the answer is:

> Since the grasping of experience by thought does not itself exist as something within our limiting conceptions, there is no limiting conception to be thought about. If there is nothing to this (grasping by thought), what valid means of knowledge can there be? [25]

Since, ultimately, the mind itself that thinks is not to be found at all, how can there exist the activity of this (mind)? Therefore, there is no limiting conception (that the mind uses to think) to be thought about. If, in essence, there is no activity whatsoever, what valid means of knowledge can be asserted?

> Therefore, the conventional ways of inquiring into things by worldly people are not necessary on this yogic path. [26]

When our relative existence has come under the power of the deceptiveness of how things appear[10] due to the impossibility of a (truly) valid means of knowledge, still, conventional means of inquiry by worldly people validly exist. However, in reality, at this stage of the yogic path of linking up (to direct insight into reality),[11] the mistaken conventions of the world are not necessary.

5. What has to be inquired into to fully grasp (this primordial state) has two aspects: (a) an inquiry into that which muddies the stream of awareness, and (b) an inquiry into that which is the clarification (of the stream of awareness).

a. An inquiry into that which muddies the stream of awareness also has two aspects: (i) an inquiry into just what is meant by "that which muddies the stream of awareness," and (ii) an inquiry into the deceptiveness of how things appear.

a.i. An inquiry into just what is meant by "that which muddies the stream of awareness" is pointed out in the following:

> Here, one should inquire into this path starting from the characteristics that are the logical basis of our limited conception: "an entity." [27]

The reason for inquiring into the limits within which we establish our conception of an "entity," is that, since one establishes the unerring path (to freedom) through inquiring into the defining characteristics of entities themselves, then in this case of seeking the ultimate path, one should inquire likewise. For example, water's defining characteristic of coolness is shown by what is characteristic of water's own essence. Also, in a canonical text it states: "To those with a thinking mind, demonstrate the characteristics of entities." Since the knowledge and thorough grasp, just as they are, of the entities which make up that which muddies the stream of awareness as well as its clarification, is the unerring path, it is necessary

to seek the path through inquiring into the defining characteristics of entities.

> This reality, known as that which is present internally and externally in the experience of all living beings, [28]

This reality, which is known as the six outer objects and the six internal knowing capacities, which (both) appear to be objects, and are known by the mind of sentient beings,

> Is not as it is seen and intended by the six forms of apprehension, but is deceptive. [29]

The six modes of awareness[12] make a delimited object out of seeing and hearing, etc. But whatever appears so, does not so exist, since it is deceptive.

> If that which is apprehended while intoxicated by one's own grasping of experience by thought, was valid, [30]

If that which is delusively seen by a person intoxicated with grasping after experience through thought, which is itself a lack of awareness, were true, then

> It would then be reasonable to say that these (sentient beings) would be free, just like those who have overcome emotional conflicts, who think, "there are no entities." [31]

Although those who have overcome emotional conflicts, and sentient beings, are different; since, (in this case), there would be no distinction in their seeing of what is true, it would stand to reason that both would obtain the goal of freedom.

> From the fact that these (sentient beings) are tormented by frustration and crushed by the enemy, time, it is evident that they are deceived. [32]

These sentient beings are tormented by the three and the eight frustrations,[13] and crushed by the enemy, time, as in illness and death. Therefore, it is evident that the ways of seeing of sentient beings are deceived.

Otherwise, if that which is known through the sense fields were a valid means of knowledge, [33]

(That which is known) is deceptive; furthermore, if it were not deceptive and that which is known through the twelve bases of our field of awareness[14] were a valid means of knowledge,

Then, this being so, who would have a need for the noble path? [34]

(This is so), since the noble path would exist in its own right in sentient beings.

The path (of ordinary perception) is taught as the path of freedom, although one is not freed through sense perception. [35]

What sentient beings see due to deception is claimed as the path to freedom, but one is not freed from the frustration of samsara by perception based on the physical sense organs. Why? As to the perceptions of various perceptible qualities by sentient beings,

Such perceptually based awareness, which does not remove any frustration, is the birthplace of that which muddies the stream of awareness. [36]

How can (perception) eliminate frustration and suffering, since it is their birthplace?

Therefore, it has been stated by the Victorious Ones that it is evident that what is perceived by sentient beings is deceptive. [37]

Thus, that which is perceived by sentient beings is, according to reason, manifestly deceptive; also according to the authoritative words of the Awakened One it is said to be deceptive.

a.ii. The second part of the inquiry into that which muddies the stream of awareness has nine sections, dealing with the deceptiveness of how things appear:

A. What appears
B. Why it appears
C. How the deceptiveness of how things appear obstructs (the path)
D. What defines perception, which is the basis of all appearance
E. How that which is to appear becomes present
F. Nothing need be added or gotten, because everything is already included within our potential for experience, which is itself what is present (when anything presents itself).
G. An answer to the question: If everything is our emerging potential for experience, why do some things and happenings appear to originate from independent conditions?
H. That which appears, things and happenings, is not to be found at all (if inquired into).
I. Even our potential for experience, from which all appearance arises, is not to be found at all (if inquired into).

A. As to the first, if one asks, what appears?, in answer it is pointed out that our potential for experience itself, by virtue of deception, is what is present as various perceptible qualities.

Then, how do these (appearances) make themselves felt due to deception? [38]

Since it is evident that (what appears) is deceptive, then how do these appearances come about for these sentient beings through deception? The answer is:

(One's potentiality for experience), which always and everywhere tries to grasp experience through thought, is automatically enfeebled by this grasping. [39]

The potential for experience of sentient beings naturally tries, always and everywhere, to grasp experience through thought. Through this grasping, which is deceived and inauthentic, one has, without doing anything, lost sight of the truth.

Since one's mental clarity, becoming deluded, has come under the power of lack of awareness acting as a conditioning factor, [40]

Since one does not see the truth, one's mental clarity becomes deluded; and since one does not then possess the ability to see the truth, one comes under the power of ignorance of the flash of knowing that gives awareness its (illumining) quality.

The general forms and specific details of experiencing appear as if existing-in-themselves, according to the three phases (of experience discussed below). [41]

The general form of experience consists of the eight modes of awareness,[15] from which arise the specific details of experience. These details are the fifty-one aspects of being caught up in experiencing.[16] Our potential for experience appears as if existing objectively in-itself, according to the three phases discussed below.[17]

Through the accumulation of habituating tendencies (engendered by) the various aspects of being caught up in a situation, when the power of that habituation has grown, [42]

By becoming habituated to the accumulated tendencies (engendered by) the various aspects of being caught up in positive and negative actions, these previously acquired tendencies mature and spread. When they possess the power of sending forth their fruit,

The potential for experience itself appears in a manner similar to that of the body and objects, as in the case of (a meditation in which) bones appear everywhere. [43]

The potential for experience itself appears in a manner similar to that of the body internally and objects externally. For example, when meditating on "impurity," one meditates on the whole world as full of bones;[18] meditating thus for a long time, when the power (of the practice) has grown and the whole world seems full of bones, it is one's own potential for

experience that appears as bones. Of the three phases, the above points out the first. The second is:

The self, which is imagined by thought when it objectifies the continuing stream of accumulating tendencies, does not exist. [44]

The arising of the conception that the evanescent stream of the fundamental structuring of all experience, together with the habituating tendencies, is a self, is nothing apart from the thinking mind. Therefore, the self, which is imagined through the power of the thought, "I," does not exist. For example, it is like the case in which, although one has taken a multicolored rope to be a snake, apart from the mere thought of a snake there does not exist in the rope the characteristic of being a snake. The third phase is:

By the power of being caught up in situations, the fundamental structuring of all experiencing has been obscured and so this subtle (foundation) is not seen. From this specific perceptions arise. [45]

The subtle fundamental structuring of all experience has been obscured by the gross appearance of the various aspects of being caught up in a situation. From not seeing this (process), perceptions and acts of knowing appear like (a mirage). For example, it is just as in the case of the arising of the thought of water when one doesn't know that it is a mirage.

B. Of this ninefold division, the second is why (the deceptiveness of how things appear) makes itself felt. The answer is: on account of not seeing how the fundamental structuring of all experience actually is. It is just as in the example of the arising of the erroneous (perception) of a snake on account of not seeing how the rope (which is the basis of this error) actually is.

Through the power of the potential for experience together with its continuing activity, one loses a profound comprehension (of how things appear), and, following in the wake of trying to grasp experience through thought, [46]

One does not understand that how things appear in their variety is due to the power of the fundamental structuring of all experience, together with the habituating tendencies. Therefore, following in the wake of the mistaken grasping after experience through thought, due to the fact that all appearances (now) have an existence of their own,

> Concepts of "self" and "entities" proliferate due to this grasping, which is by nature unstable. [47]

In the wake of this mistake, the concepts of "self," which is accidentally imagined by this grasping of experience by thought and is the motivating cause of samsara and the fall into the three realms of existence; as well as that of "entities," internal and external, proliferate.

> By not seeing this very subtle movement (of the fundamental structuring of all experience) that has arisen possessing (the habituating tendencies), the various philosophical views of the Hindus, such as that of the self, arise and are held to be liberating. [48–49]

It can be demonstrated that, through not seeing the necklacelike fundamental structuring of all experience, the many forms of Hinduistic philosophy arise.[19] If one asks why they arise, the answer (follows in the next verses):

> Once the potential for experience has provided the site for limitless actions, the duration of the habituating tendencies is endless and indeterminable, [50]

The fundamental structuring of all experience, which is called our "potential for experience," is the site for the limitless habituating tendencies connected with good and evil actions. Since the habituating tendencies present in the fundamental structuring are limitless, there is no way to be certain and say that these habituating tendencies are not present (at any time when the fundamental structuring exists).

> While the conditions for the awakening and growth of the habituating tendencies are various. [51]

The habituating tendencies remain "in" the fundamental structuring. Variously, through positive conditions the tendency towards birth in the higher realms of existence arises; while through negative conditions and the muddying of the stream of awareness, the tendency towards birth in the lower realms of existence arises.

> Although, through the maturation of (previously accumulated) tendencies due to the appropriate conditions, a human body appears, [52]

Through the maturation and awakening of tendencies that were present previously in the process of fundamental structuring and that make for human birth in this life, a human body is obtained and manifests itself.

> When other conditions awaken other tendencies, (there can be another form of life). Seeing the power of this process of change, [53]

When the tendencies, previously present in the fundamental structuring process that are the motivating cause of birth as a god mature and awaken due to the conditions for birth as a god, i.e., one other than human, seeing this change from human into god,

> It is claimed that this is done by Śiva, etc. But that path does not alleviate (suffering) or lead to liberation. [54]

The change of birth from man to god is seen by worldly supernormal perception;[20] yet through not understanding that this birth as a god (comes about) only through its own causes and conditions, one thinks that this is accomplished by a creator such as Śiva, and one claims that the path to freedom is based on the creator.[21] But (in this case), since frustration and suffering are not alleviated, one will not even be freed from the faults of the three realms of existence.

> The enfeeblement of the yogic path as well as the source of doubt arise from the lack of a profound grasp of this subtle continuity (of the fundamental structuring of all experience). [55]

One becomes diverted from the yogic path to reality; the cause of doubt and enfeeblement (on the path) also are born through not understanding this subtle movement of the fundamental structuring of all experience. For example, it is as in the case of one who doesn't really know a rope as it is and takes it to be a snake, or is in doubt, thinking, "Is it a snake or not?"

Then, when these various forms of experience arise through deception, what obstacle is there, one might ask?

C. Pointing out that the deceptiveness of how things appear is an obstacle: this is the third of the ninefold division.

> By imagining a self, one has completely obscured (one's own existence) and been divorced from the lineage of the Noble Ones. [56]

Since those who belong to the lineage of the Noble Ones do not have the concept of self, by imagining a self in regard to what is not a self, there is the obstacle of not obtaining the goal (freedom) and of being divorced from the lineage of the Noble Ones.

> By imagining entities, a variety of frustrations arises, and so one will be reborn in the lower realms. [57]

Through imagining a variety of entities one enters into various actions. By various actions various frustrations also will be experienced, and one will be reborn in the three lower realms through this unwholesome activity.

D. The fourth of the ninefold division is how to define perception, the basis of all appearance.

> Since perception, moreover, seizes on different identifiable qualities out of the spectrum of conditioned events, [58]

By seizing on, through perception, the different identifiable characteristics of conditioned events, such as sound and form,

> It appears as eightfold due to these specific activities, although it is not manifold in its essential function. [59]

Since there exist the eight modes of perceiving the identifiable characteristics of conditioned events, such as seeing form and hearing sound, awareness is taken as eightfold.[22] However, there are not multiple types (of awareness), since they all have the typical function of knowing and being aware.

E. The fifth of the ninefold division is: how is the variety of what is to appear (present) in the fundamental structuring process?

> Therefore, in the first moment of experience, one's body and all configurations of events and meanings are present. [60]

As shown above, since there do not (actually) exist different (forms of) the potential for experience, in only one moment of this potential, i.e., the fundamental structuring of all experience, the body together with its sensory organs, as well as all other entities, are present. If one asks: why are there appearances homogeneous with the previous ones in the subsequent moments of experiencing, the answer is,

> On account of thinking about and becoming obsessed with something, in a later (moment) that (thought) that has arisen (in accord with the earlier moment) makes itself felt. [61]

(The author) points out that something appears (in some way) by virtue of attachment to and obsession with it; therefore, just as one became obsessed thinking about something previous, later there arises thus an appearance in accord with (the former).[23]

F. The sixth of the ninefold division is to point out that nothing need be gotten, because everything is included within our potential for experience, which is the basis of appearance.

> Nothing exists for ordinary people and Noble Ones apart from the continuum of their own experiencing. [62]

As explained above, all configurations of events and meanings, without exception, are present in the first moment of experiencing.

> This variety (of experience) that exists for the six types of sentient beings (appears) through their own habitual mode of vision. [63]

The six types of sentient beings, such as men and gods, are (actually) a single type appearing variously. These (six) are moreover, appearances through the power of a habitual mode of vision that they have become acquainted with and accustomed to, but which has no beginning in time. If one asks: how is there nonduality due to the fact that all (appearance) is (not other than) oneself? The answer is:

> Since this continuum of experiencing is without any boundaries, (to call it) "one" is (also) without foundation. [64]

All of that which muddies the stream of awareness, as well as its clarification, are one's own potential for experience. In this momentary flow of experiencing there cannot be shown a single thing, saying "this is like this," regarding directions such as above and below, east and west, or limits such as existence and nonexistence. Therefore, even the oneness (of experience) cannot be pointed out.

> Since that has no boundaries, all the limitless Buddha-fields are one's own body. [65]

If (even) a single boundary or division existed (in the potential for experience), its "oneness" could not be demonstrated; this is even more so in the case of a thing. If one then says that (the potential for experience) is just like the sky, which is not a thing (and hence unitary), we also reply that one can't make this into a "oneness," since in the empty sky there are various directions of center and periphery, as well as directions such as east and west. Since ultimately there is no partiality whatsoever in the continuum of experience, it is indivisible into parts. Since it is one in its not being able to be made into an object, it actually is the pure and impure Buddha-fields.[24]

> In that one's own body appears as the body of living beings and as limitless Buddha-fields, it is also difficult to postulate that the potential for experiencing and the habituating tendencies are either one or diverse. [66–67]

Thus, since everything is one's own dimension, and one's own dimension is oneself, and one's own dimension is everything, from the beginning there is no obtaining of what has not been obtained previously. It is difficult also to imagine that the potentiality for experience and habituating tendencies are either one or diverse; they are neither one nor many. For example, it is impossible to say whether color and shape are one or diverse.

G. The seventh of the ninefold division is the question: if everything is our potential for experience, why do things appear to arise from independent causes and conditions?

> (One says), "all these (configurations of events and meanings) come about and disappear according to dependent originations." But, like a burnt seed, since a nonexistent (result) does not come about from a nonexistent (cause), cause and effect do not exist. [68–69]

It is said that all configurations of events and meanings come about as a result of depending on a cause; while if there is no basis existing, they cease. For example, as in the case of a burnt seed that does not give rise to a fruit, all configurations of events and meanings are not, in actuality, to be found. Since from a nonexistent cause a nonexistent result does not arise, there is no saying, "this is the cause and this is the effect." Well, then, why does it seem to all sentient beings that a result comes about based on a cause?

> Being obsessed with entities, one's experiencing itself, which discriminates each cause and effect, appears as if it were cause and condition. [70–71a]

Since beginningless time it is just our potential for experience itself that thinks of and is obsessed with the reality of the causation of entities, and appears as if it were cause and effect. How is it possible that our potentiality for experience manifests itself from a nonexistent cause and effect? In a dream, for

example, from the cause of having drunk beer, there appears the result of intoxication, and from cultivating a field, a harvest seems to come about. In the same way, while cause and effect do not exist entitatively, since beginningless time they appear as in a dream by virtue of the discrimination of cause and effect.

H. The eighth of the ninefold division is to point out that that which appears, things and happenings, is not to be found at all (if inquired into).

> Since these two (cause and effect) do not exist, origination and cessation do not exist. [71b]

Since these two, cause and effect, do not exist, the arising of an effect dependent on a cause does not exist. If (something) is not produced, what basis for its cessation is there? Cessation also does not exist.

> Since origination and cessation do not exist, self and other do not exist. Since there is no transformation and death, eternity and annihilation do not exist. [72]

If there is no origination and no cessation, what is "self," what is "other"? If there is no self and other, who dies, who is transformed? Thus, since there is no death, there is no annihilation. Since there is no transformation, there is no permanence.

> Therefore, it is evident that deceptive samsara as well as nirvana do not exist. [73]

Birth and death, eternalism and nihilism, etc. do not exist. Therefore, since it follows that deception and samsara also do not exist, it is evident that nirvana, which is based on there being samsara, also does not exist.

I. The last of the ninefold division is to point out that even our potential for experience itself, which is the basis of appearance, is not to be found (if inquired into):

> The momentary site (i.e., the fundamental structuring) is never separate (from the habituating tendencies). They are really the same phenomenon and (if one) does not exist, (the other) does not exist. [74]

The momentary fundamental structuring process that is the site for the habituating tendencies, and the habituating tendencies themselves, are never separate. If the fundamental structuring of all experience does not exist, the habituating tendencies cannot exist. For example, if color didn't exist, shape couldn't exist. If shape were nonexistent, color couldn't exist. They are the same in that if one exists, then both exist; or if one doesn't exist, then both don't exist. The habituating tendencies not existing, the fundamental structuring of all experience also does not exist. Why?

> Since they are produced by trying to grasp experience with thought, which is completely mistaken, the habituating tendencies do not exist and, [75]

Since they are produced by the mistaken grasping after experience through thought, it is not possible that the habituating tendencies can be said to exist. If these habituating tendencies do not exist,

> Since there then does not exist a sphere of operation (for the fundamental structuring), the fundamental structuring of all experience as well as perceptual and cognitive activities do not exist. [76]

The sphere of operation of the fundamental structuring process is the habituating tendencies. Since the habituating tendencies do not exist, their sphere of operation does not exist. Since cognitive activity cannot come about if it has no object, the fundamental structuring, which is dependent on its sphere of operation, also does not exist. Also, all cognitive operations (based on the fundamental structuring) are just nonexistent.

> Since boundaries do not exist (in experience), an objective support or a site (for its operation) do not exist. How then can perceptual and cognitive activities arise? [77]

Since it was shown above that any boundaries (in the potential for experience) are not to be found, the habituating tendencies that are an object for the mind, as well as the fundamental structuring of all experience that is the site (of their operation), do not exist. Then how can cognitive operations that are based on this arise?

> Therefore, experiencing is beyond the limiting conceptions of existence and nonexistence, and is neither a unity nor a plurality. [78]

The general form and specific details of experiencing are nothing whatsoever. Therefore, in being beyond existence and nonexistence, they can't be "one" or "many."

b. The inquiry into that which is the clarification (of the stream of awareness) also has two aspects: (i) Pointing out that this state of clarification makes itself felt within deception itself; and (ii) pointing out that this very appearance also is not to be found (if inquired into).

b.i. Pointing out how the state of clarification makes itself felt within the state of deception is as follows:

> Since the state of pure and total presence of the Joyful One does not exist, it is a magical apparition of that (state) that appears to those who are deluded. [79]

Since even the awakened state of the Joyful One ultimately is not to be found, it is evident that a magical display of this, like an apparition, appears in this case to those who are deluded. Thus, the *Diamond Sūtra* states:[25]

> Those who see me as form, those who know me as sound,
> Have entered the wrong path—these beings do not see me.
> The Awakened Ones see the ultimate content of what is. The real guides (of living beings) are their primordial contact with the total field of events and meanings. [The ultimate content of what is not an object of knowledge, therefore it cannot be perceived.]

b.ii. Also, pointing out that the appearance of the state of clarification is not to be found, has two aspects: (A) pointing out that nonconceptual ever-fresh awareness is not to be found; and (B) pointing out that a pure, though worldly, ever-fresh awareness is not to be found.

A. How is it that nonconceptual ever-fresh awareness is not to be found (if inquired into)?

> In the same way, although these pure forms of ever-fresh awareness, [inseparable from] the total field of events and meanings and the continuity of wholly positive actions [connected with it], are imagined to come about [in time] and be objectifiable, [80–81]

In the same way as the potential for experience is not found, ever-fresh awareness also is not found. How is this? These forms of nonconceptual ever-fresh awareness belonging to the state of an Awakened One, purify all the concepts elaborated by the mind. Yet, due to grasping through thought and objectifying the flawless total field of events and meanings as well as the ongoing and immeasurable continuity of positive activities (connected with it, these forms of ever-fresh awareness) are thought of and imagined as coming into existence (as something). But,

> Since there is no causal basis for vajra-like (ever-fresh awareness), (our potential for experience, as causal basis, and ever-fresh awareness, as result) are alike regarding this similar condition (of nonexistence). And, [82]

Also, if the foundation or motivating cause of conceptless ever-fresh awareness, which is called *vajra*, is the potential for experience of sentient beings, then since it was shown above that this potential itself does not exist and can't be found (when inquired into), then the cause here does not exist and the result also does not come about. Thus, since the two (potential for experience and ever-fresh awareness) are the same in not being found, ever-fresh awareness is not to be found just as the potential for experience is not to be found. Although the Mentalists say that a momentary, conceptless ever-fresh awareness ultimately does exist,[26] it is not to be found. Why?

Since these supreme forms of vajra-like (ever-fresh awareness) that (thoroughly grasp) the total field of events and meanings, are without boundaries, they are not momentary events. [83]

The nonconceptual ever-fresh awareness that fully grasps the total field of events and meanings is excellent and supreme, like a vajra. If characteristics such as these cannot be made into an object for the mind, then how can one speak of momentariness?

B. Why is pure, though worldly, ever-fresh awareness not to be found?[27]

Since the source of pure, positive qualities is nonexistent like a reflection, ever-fresh awareness that deals with mundane matters does not exist. [84]

Since the source of that which is positive, which completely purifies the three aspects (of actor, action, and object of activity), is nonexistent like a reflection, how can pure, though worldly, ever-fresh awareness that is based on this, exist?

6. Of the twelve major topics, the sixth is pointing out the real meaning (grasped) after inquiring into (the above). It has three aspects: (a) pointing out fundamental alikeness (at the level) of thought; (b) fundamental alikeness (at the level) of behavior; and (c) a summary of what defines the primordial experience of pure and total presence.

a. Fundamental alikeness (at the level) of thought has three aspects: (i) fundamental alikeness because the two truths are not divided and there is no acceptance and rejection; (ii) fundamental alikeness of truth and falsity, since there is no aversion to that which is objectionable and no longing for that which is positive; and (iii) fundamental alikeness because there is nothing for the mind to objectify, since one is free from the four limiting conceptions.[28]

a.i. Fundamental alikeness since there is no division into two truths and nothing to accept or reject, is pointed out by the following:

Therefore, since what we define as "pure and total presence" and "lack of pure and total presence" are one in not existing, there is nothing to accept or reject. [85]

It was demonstrated above that that which muddies the stream of awareness as well as its clarification are not to be found (if inquired into). Therefore, since what we define as Pure and Total Presence, i.e., the state of an Awakened One, and Lack of Pure and Total Presence i.e., the state of sentient beings, are one in not existing, there is no state of an Awakened One to be obtained and no status of sentient being to be rejected. If what is called the "ultimate" also does not exist, then how can there be terms that indicate "the ultimate is such and such"?

In this sense, then, the terms for the ultimate, such as *nonexistence of origination and cessation, fundamental alikeness, nonduality, beyond thought, openness, the total field of events and meanings, beyond conventional designations and language*, are all conventional designations. When the ultimate does not exist, then the state of a pervasive lack of clarity does not exist. [86–88]

If what is called the "ultimate" does not exist, then how can there be terms that indicate that the "ultimate is such and such"? According to the sense (pointed out) above, all of these terms for the "ultimate," such as *nonexistence of origination and cessation, fundamental alikeness, nonduality, beyond thought, openness, the total field of events and meanings, free from conventional designations and language*, etc., are conventional explanations. In the real, definitive sense, the "ultimate" and "the state of a pervasive lack of clarity" do not exist.

Saying that something ultimately is the case, is itself the state of a pervasive lack of clarity. [89]

The "ultimate" or the "relative" are conventional designations belonging to the relative (i.e., conditioned) level of the state of a lack of clarity. In reality, in the realm of nonduality, how can there be a division into the two truths?

a.ii. Pointing out the fundamental alikeness of truth and falsity, since there is no aversion to the objectionable and no longing for the positive:

> One should not remain in a state wherein there is no doubt,
> nor eliminate a state of doubt. [90]

Since the duality of true and false does not exist, then even when there is no doubt, having seen the truth, or when there is doubt, having not seen the truth, one should not try to stay with the truth or eliminate untruth. Why?

> Since there is no meditator and no total field of events and meanings (as object of meditation), there is neither doubt nor genuine insight. [91]

Who fully grasps what, when ultimately there is no meditator who fully comprehends and no total field of events and meanings fully comprehended? Since there is no doubt, then in the absence of doubt there is no genuine insight. Also the canonical texts agree (that one should) "eliminate longing for what is positive."

a.iii. Pointing out fundamental alikeness since there is nothing for the mind to objectify and one is free from the four limiting conceptions:

> Since, if one inquires into our limiting conception, "entities," they are (found to be) nonexistent even as regards their apparitional nature, [92]

As shown above, if one inquires into entities within our limiting conception, they are not to be found as having even an apparitional nature,

> Then even this nonexistence, which is dependent upon existence, is nonexistent. Also, the nonexistence of this nonexistence does not exist. [93]

If existence is not to be found, is there then nonexistence? If existence itself is not to be found, whose nonexistence is this nonexistence? Therefore, if existence is not to be found, one can't postulate a nonexistence based on this existence. Well,

then, is it possible to speak of "nonexistence" in regard to this state of complete nonexistence in which nothing, by its very nature, comes into existence? It is not. Since what does not exist as any fact, which is not seen or heard, cannot be called or thought of as "nonexistent," even nonexistence does not exist as nonexistence.

> Since the limiting concepts do not exist, the middle (between these) does not exist. One does not remain even in a "middle." [94]

The nonexistence of the limiting conceptions of existence and nonexistence, etc., has been pointed out above. Then, if a limiting conception does not exist, what "middle" can there be? Even the middle does not exist. Since the middle does not exist, one cannot remain even in this middle.

b. Fundamental alikeness (at the level) of behaviour (is shown by the following):

> Just as the "Lotus-like Lord" of everything worldly does not reject anything, (all things) are seen as alike and present in utter sameness. [95]

"Powerful"[29] is spoken of in regard to actions for the sake of any excellent thing whatsoever that is desired in the world. (Further it means) that that which one possesses, one is able to use. "Rich" is spoken of in regard to the absence of avarice and the enjoyment of the excellent things desired. Although it seems that a lotus is stained by a red color, it is not stained or diminished (in its purity) by this new color. In the same way, although one is involved with the five excellent things desired in the world[30] and it seems that one is tainted by error, just as a lotus is not stained by coloring, one is not tainted by error. Therefore, one says, "Lotus-like Lord." Further, just as a lotus is not tainted by faults, (symbolized by) water, etc., since one is not tainted by error when one fully grasps the sense of what was pointed out above, one says, "Lotus-like Lord." If one is not tainted, like a lotus, this is also the meaning of, "not rejecting (anything) but engaging in the five plea-

sures." "Present in utter sameness" refers to faults and good qualities, since they are fundamentally alike, without any distinction. Since they are fundamentally alike and not distinguished (on this level), one remains in a state of not rejecting (anything).

> This very seeing as deceptive that which (is fundamentally not deceptive) is to be understood as deception. [96]

If even sentient beings are not to be found, who is deceived? This very seeing (of things) as deceptive, which are not (themselves) deceptive, is to be understood as deception. Therefore,

> Even the teachings of the six (Hindu schools) and the deeds of the Lord of limitations are not rejected and regarded as negative. [97]

Since even the teachings of the six Hindu teachers,[31] the factors that muddy the stream of awareness and that are an obstacle to a wholesome existence, the deeds of the Lord of limitations, etc., are not made an object for the mind, they are not thought of as bad and rejected.

> Since even engaging in skillful action and discernment do not exist, engaging in them is like the (activity) of the Lord of limitations. [98]

In their not being found (if inquired into), there is no basis for what is defined as "engaging in skillful action and discernment." Since the activities of the Lord of limitations, as well as these, are the same in being unborn, engaging in them is on the same level.

> Having become proud through taking one's understanding as the best, superior to all, attachment and aversion arise, from which arguments come about. This is lack of awareness. The real point is not seen. [99–100]

From the (standpoint of) being free from all philosophical views, attachment to the viewpoint even of "seeing reality as it is," is a fault. Ultimately, although both truth and falsity are not to be found, having become conceited in one's own view through pride, thinking, "I understand the truth through my

own intelligence," there arises antipathy for the positions of others and attachment to one's own position. Then, although there is nothing called "truth" one says that my viewpoint is true; and although there is nothing known as "falsity," one says that the others' viewpoint is false and in error. This kind of arguing is ignorance. One doesn't see the real meaning of not conceiving of truth and falsity.

c. Summing up, pointing out what defines the primordial state of pure and total presence:

> As long as there is the agitated movement of the mind, there is the realm of the Lord of limitations. (This practice of pure and total presence) is a subtle path, in which one does not remain even in the states of the absence of movement of thought or of nonmovement. This middle path in which there is no deceptive appearance has been called the "primordial state of pure and total presence" by the Awakened Ones. [101–103]

One does not even remain in a state of the nonexistence of any conventional designations, such as either the "movement" or "nonmovement"[32] of thought and the identifiable characteristics with which it deals. The nonexistence of what appears as an object grasped by thought, such as "it is such," "something is felt," or "feeling has ceased," is the Middle Way. By directing the mind in such a manner towards the real meaning, since unparalleled pure and total presence is realized, it has been called the "primordial state of pure and total presence" by the Awakened Ones.

7. From the twelve topics, the seventh is putting the real meaning into practice, which also has two parts: (a) pointing out the obstacles to practice, and (b) pointing out the true meaning of practice.

a. Obstacles to practice (are shown as follows):

> Having eliminated holding on to form, identifiable characteristics, and wishfulness, while cultivating the three "gateways to freedom," is the activity of the Lord of limitations. Form (itself) is open-dimensional. [104–105]

Since nonconceptual cultivation is without any acceptance and rejection, if one eliminates the three obstacles of form, etc., and holds to the three "gateways to freedom," of openness, absence of identifiable characteristics, and desirelessness,[33] this is the activity of the Lord of limitations since one falls into the extremes of acceptance and rejection. Since form itself is open-dimensional, identifiable characteristics themselves without identifiable characteristics, and desire itself the absence of desire, there is nothing to eliminate.

> Eliminating the three paths of samsara while cultivating nirvana is also the activity of the Lord of limitations. This (kind of cultivation) is not the quiet nature of everything. There is not any (samsara) eliminated or actual state (of nirvana) sought. [106–107]

That which sets up samsara is called "the path of samsara." Even the elimination of attachment, aversion, and ignorance, along with the cultivation and seeking of nirvana, are the very activity of the Lord of limitations. Thus, that type of cultivation does not understand the quiet nature of everything, since both the seeking of the path to nirvana and the eliminating of the way of samsara are not to be found and just do not exist.

> Nirvana, and so forth, the status (reached) and realm of vision of all the Noble Ones, do not exist apart from this very path. [108]

Apart from the path taught here, which realizes the superior capacities—such as the realm of pure vision of the Noble Ones and the state that they have reached; nirvana (that is obtained) through not being conditioned by, as well as through abandoning, the obstacles spoken of (above); and so forth—there is no other path for realizing the status of an Awakened One.

b. Pointing out the true meaning of cultivation has four aspects: (i) briefly pointing out the true sense of cultivation; (ii) a (brief) explanation of why, according to reason, (one ought) to so practice; (iii) pointing out the signs of proper cultivation; and (iv) pointing out the logical reason for cultivating in this way.[34]

b.i. Pointing out the true sense of cultivation:

> When (a thought) arises one does not eliminate it, nor does one construct a support for the mind when no (thought) arises. [109]

One does not eliminate thoughts when they arise, nor the identifiable characteristics with which they deal; one does not fashion a support for the mind on account of the nonarising (of thought); nor does one realize an ultimate reality or goal.

b.ii. Why should one cultivate as above?

> (Even if) there stirs the slightest (thought) that is not (the dimension of knowledge called) Mañjuśrī, this itself is still that (dimension of knowledge). But one does not try to remain in that. [110]

Why does one neither "eliminate" nor "remain"? The answer is that Mañjuśrī refers to the ultimate content of what is, which is (here metaphorically) called "gentle" because there is no irritation; and since thoroughly comprehending it one becomes "lordly," one says "Gentle Lord" (Mañjuśrī).[35] One may take even the slightest stirring of mistaken grasping after identifiable characteristics as something other than the ultimate content of what is, i.e., Mañjuśrī. But, in that this itself is also the ultimate content of what is, there is nothing to eliminate since it is not other than the very nature of the Noble Mañjuśrī. What is this ultimate content like? It's not anything at all; therefore, since there is no basis for remaining even in the nature of Mañjuśrī, the ultimate content of what is, it says, "one does not try to remain in that."

> Since one cannot obtain a foundation for meditation, one will not obtain any result by meditation.
> Grasping experience through thought, which is the sphere of operation of our "mind," is itself the ultimate content of what is. [111–112]

Why is there no (goal) to bring into reality? Since both a mind that meditates and an "ultimate content of what is" to be

meditated upon can't be found, one cannot obtain a basis or ground for meditation. Since that does not exist, who obtains a goal by what meditation? Therefore, there is no (goal) to bring into reality. The sphere of the operation of mind is itself the ultimate content of what is. Any perceptible quality of an object that appears, or construct of mind that is born, is not other than the ultimate content of what is. Thus it is shown to lack nothing. Any intended object[36] that appears in the sphere of operation of the mind is the ultimate content of what is. Therefore, any intended object that appears lacks nothing. If there is nothing wrong, why do sentient beings (wander in) samsara? Because they latch on to various identifiable characteristics. In order to point out that freedom from identifiable characteristics (means) not wandering in samsara, (there is the following):

> Since one is free from (seizing on) perceptible qualities, there does not exist anything that is better or worse. This supreme path is to be cultivated. [113]

What is meant by a "perceptible quality"? Since the coming about of a perceptible quality, whether it be of a directly sensed object or a mental process regarding a past object, produces an awareness and a latching on to (that perceptible quality), there is the awareness of a perceptible quality that we term "perception."[37] Cultivating what truly is, is spoken of as "free from perceptible qualities" because there is no latching on to any such perceptible quality. Thus, to practice not latching on to such a perceptible quality is the supreme path, since one does not see things in terms of better or worse. Although the grasping of experience through thought arises, that there is no problem is (pointed out as follows):

> Since neither do conditioned events arise (on their own) nor do all configurations of events and meanings come about (dependently), all these are taken beyond the realm of frustration and suffering.
> When (one has thoroughly grasped that) there are no "entities," everything then (arises) as the total field of events and meanings—understanding this is the supreme state of those who have overcome emotional conflicts. [114–115]

All configurations of contingent events are, in their very fact of being, "unborn"; that is, since they do not even come about through external causes and conditions, they are characterized by being beyond the realm of suffering. Therefore, when one fully grasps or intrinsically knows this, there is no defect (to be found) in whatever thought or awareness arises. (This) intrinsic knowing or full grasp of the total field of events and meanings is called the "supreme state of having overcome emotional conflicts." It is (also) called the "supreme state of having overcome emotional conflicts," since it is the destruction of the enemy, the darkness of lack of awareness.[38]

> Space is unobjectifiable and is a mere name. That which is positive for an individual and that which is negative, being indivisible, do not arise. [116]

As an example of the meaning of what has been taught above (one says that such a method of cultivation) is like the sky. "The sky" is just a mere name; the reality indicated by the name cannot be objectified as having any defining characteristic. Therefore, that which is positive and negative, etc. cannot be divided into two, since they do not arise.

b.iv. An extensive explanation that one should practice thus, on account of it's having been logically established by the reasons shown above:

> The mind is not engaged in seeking nor is it directed towards anything. One is free from knowing and not knowing. [117]

One does not engage the mind in seeking something to affirm or reject, nor does one direct the mind towards any objective support. Since even mind itself is not to be found and one doesn't make a distinction between knowing and not knowing, it says, "free from knowing and not knowing."

> There is neither picking out nor attending to (aids to meditation).[39] Delight in acceptance and rejection are alike in not existing. Not objectifying (anything), and [118]

Since both obstacles (to fully grasping) the true sense, as well as the antidotes (for these), are indivisible, there is no attending to the antidotes. Neither does a person who delights in acceptance and rejection exist. There is no setting up of obstacles and their antidotes, in that they are fundamentally alike, equal. One does not objectify anything, and

> Remaining with the (understanding of) this alikeness, there is no creation of duality; one is beyond the realm of speech; there is neither activity nor inactivity; there is no accumulation (of merit) or diminution (of faults), etc. [119]

Remaining with (the understanding) of fundamental alikeness, there is neither desire nor absence of desire; through not making divisions there is also no fabrication of dualism. Since there is no latching on to (thinking) "this is such and such," one does not verbalize anything; therefore one is free from verbalization. There is no "having to do something," since there is no striving. There is also no inactivity, since one does not find any problem with actions through the three gates (of body, "speech," and mind). There is (also) no bringing to fulfillment the two accumulations,[40] just as in the saying, "In the ultimate content of what is, there is nothing to increase or diminish."

b.iii. How do the signs of proper cultivation arise?

> One's mind is not engaged in seeking anything. One is not disturbed by anything, knowing the fundamental alikeness (of everything); and [120]

Practicing unerringly as taught above, when there arises the knowledge of fundamental alikeness, the signs (of proper practice) arise.

> There is no fear of intoxication by objects or attachment to anything. One does not avoid nor dwell on (anything). [121]

There is neither dullness nor intoxication due to one's normal awareness of objects, nor desire and attachment to anything. Since they are without essence, there is no fear of, or desire for, anything. Therefore, one does not avoid anything. Since there is no delighting in and then being attached to anything, one does not dwell on anything.

> The ways of overcoming (limitations), the facets (of pure and total presence), the four forms of ever-fresh awareness of the alikeness (of everything), which are undisturbed (by negative conditions), are known in this (practice). [122]

The four forms of ever-fresh awareness that thoroughly grasp the fundamental alikeness (that characterizes) the ultimate content of what is and that are not conditioned by any obstacles; the thirty-seven facets of pure and total presence; the ten ways of overcoming (limitations), etc.;[41] and that which is positive for an individual (relatively speaking), as well as all the positive qualities that belong to the level of the ultimate goal,[42] are known quickly through the reflexive flash of knowing that gives awareness its quality, and brought together in the teaching of the true sense of cultivation.

> Cultivating the all-encompassing field of experience (is) this path; if one has cultivated otherwise, the transparent clarity (of the field) will not come about. [123]

Since all entities are included within the expanse of our potential for experience, cultivating this potential itself according to the sense taught above develops into an unerring path. If one practices otherwise, despite this practice the knowledge and clarity intrinsic (to thoroughly grasping) the true sense will not come about.

8. Of the twelve topics, the eighth is: what are the special methods taught for fully grasping the real meaning? The answer is:

> To really get (the meaning) through symbolic means is also "pure and total presence": so has the Teacher proclaimed. [124]

For example, just as one gestures to give the meaning, "come over here" by a symbolic gesture with the right hand; so, by the activity of focusing the mind one can fully comprehend, just as it is, what is meant by "nonaction."[43] Moreover, since this makes for the realization of pure and total presence, the Teacher, the Awakened One, has proclaimed, "It is pure and total presence."

> (The symbolic means) are here the foundation for the activation and cultivation of pure and total presence itself. [125]

The "symbolic encounters" and "contemplations" (pointed out) next are the basis, or motivating cause, for the activation and cultivation of the absolutely genuine, primordial state of pure and total presence.

> Having made use of the three "symbolic encounters" that are indicative of (facets of the existence of an Awakened One), and made firm the three contemplations, [126]

When one has not arrived at the real sense of "nonaction," (one employs) the contemplation by focusing without thought; the contemplation that is present everywhere like the sky; and the contemplation of *A*, *OM*, etc., the "causal" contemplation, which are the "three contemplations."[44] In being the defining characteristic of the three contemplations, "firm" refers to not coming under (the power of) disturbing conditions. "Indicative" means, for example, that since that which indicates (the presence of) a king is his symbol, all the actions of a king are done using this symbol. Similarly, through the symbols indicative of an Awakened One, all the charismatic activities are performed. The symbolic encounter indicative of "primordial contact" is called the "supreme symbolic encounter"; the symbolic encounter indicative of "primordial experiencing" is called the "symbolic encounter based on commitments"; and the symbolic encounter indicative of "primordial action" is called the "symbolic encounter

through activity."[45] Having had, as well as developed, these three symbolic encounters, then, through the symbolic encounter indicative of "primordial communication,"

> Primordial experience itself is activated in the "symbolic encounter with the ultimate content of what is."[46] One should visualize and recite the heart mantra (of the divinity that represents that). [127]

"Contemplations" and "symbolic encounters" are themselves the ultimate content of what is. Without separating oneself from these, also by activating the intent (to experience pure and total presence) along with concentrating on and reciting the heart-mantra of a divinity, the ultimate primordial state of pure and total presence will arise. How will it come about? By practicing as above for a long time. When one has made such a practice palpably real, then there will arise the reflexive flash of knowing that gives awareness its quality, the thorough grasp of reality that "sees that there does not exist anything apart from one's own potential for experience itself appearing."[47] One will also come to this thorough knowledge through the arising of the accumulation of merit that purifies one's obstacles, along with the above cultivation.

9. Pointing out that without fully taking hold of the primordial state of pure and total presence, freedom will not be obtained and positive qualities will come to an end:

> By this "cultivation of the commitment to what is indestructible" all paths are unerringly cultivated. [128]

As pointed out above, since the potential for experience is, in actuality, the ultimate content of what is, (one speaks of) "vajra." The being who is unerringly intent on this is called "Vajrasattva." Experiencing, itself, when envisaging things wrongly appears as the all-pervasive muddying of the stream of awareness; while when envisaging things as they are, it appears as the various ways of being free. Therefore, it is shown that "all paths are unerringly cultivated."

> If anything positive for the individual, whatever it may be, has not been taken up by the way of acting (symbolized by) Samantabhadrī, [129]

If one understands and thoroughly grasps all that one does according to what has been pointed out above, since it is then all wholly positive, one speaks of "Samantabhadrī." Since this is the place of origin of all superior capacities without exception, then just as a child comes from a mother, one speaks of this in the feminine. The above reality, empowered as a female divinity, is referred to as "Samantabhadrī." She is considered to be real discernment itself.[48] If any (positive activity) has not been taken up by discernment,

> Then the way of acting (symbolized by) Samantabhadra becomes the activity of the Lord of limitations—in which case it will reach its limit and be exhausted. [130]

Since the skillful method of acting in the supreme, comprehensive approach is positive for oneself and others, one speaks of "Samantabhadra." Also, since all one's ways of acting through the three "gates," which have been taken up by the above discernment, are positive, one (also) speaks of "Samantabhadrī." Thus, if all one's ways of acting have not been taken up by the above discernment, they will not become wholly positive. Then, since even all skillful activity done for the benefit of oneself and others is found to be the mere result of worldly desire, it will reach its limit and finally be nonexistent:

> On the path that possesses this (primordial state of pure and total presence), even the activity of the Lord of limitations is said to be the activity of this pure and total presence. [131]

Actions through the three "gates," as well as all configurations of events and meanings, inner and outer, are limited and uncertain, since from the mere understanding or lack of understanding (of them) comes the motivating cause of that which muddies the stream of awareness or its clarification.

10. Pointing out that even the arousal of more intense interest (in this primordial state) leads to many superior abilities:

> Intense interest in the meaning of this, moreover, has been praised by the Victorious One as "great, pure and total presence." [132]

Because intense interest and conviction in the true sense of what has been pointed out above is "great, pure and total presence," this very dedication to, and knowledge of, just this has been praised by the Awakened One: "This is great, pure and total presence."

> By the mere activation of this source, the Awakened One has proclaimed, one will overcome the (limitations represented by) the host of the Lord of limitations, as well as the Śrāvakas, who are the object of veneration of the triple world and its rulers. [133]

By the mere activation of this primordial state that is the birthplace of all superior abilities, it is said that one will overcome (the limitations represented by) the host of the Lord of limitations, as well as the Śrāvakas, who are an object of reverence in the world. That is, the objects of reverence of the beings of the triple world together with their lords, Brahma and Indra, are the Śrāvakas.[49]

> The greatest skillful action is this hidden activity of these committed to pure and total presence. [135]

Although the great skillful action that makes unparalleled pure and total presence real, is understood and put into action by those who are committed to this primordial state, it is not known by the Śrāvakas, etc. Therefore, it is just this which is naturally hidden (from the Śrāvakas, etc.).

> If this (state of pure and total presence) did not exist, then the Victorious One could not make his appearance,[50] and it would then be impossible that the three approaches to the teaching be taught. [136]

If this state of pure and total presence pointed out above were not thoroughly grasped or didn't exist, the state of an Awakened One could not be realized. If there were no Awakened One, it would be impossible for the three approaches to the teaching to be taught by another.

> In a mere instant, by the power of trusting confidence, moreover, one quickly becomes the youthful Mañjuśrī. [137]

Mañjuśrī actually also is this, since by thoroughly grasping this, (his status) is realized.

> Also, while the supreme commitments of the supreme, comprehensive approach to the teachings are kept and the hidden dimensions of existence[51] entered, all commitments and ethical behavior are protected and (those committed to pure and total presence) greatly praised as a noble object for offerings. [138–9]

As pointed out above, this is so because there is no superior ability which is not included in this primordial state of pure and total presence. Therefore, from this primordial state one obtains countless accumulations of merit. How is this? Because

> If the merit of the state of pure and total presence had form, even the extent of space would be too small a container for it, the Victorious Ones have equally proclaimed. [140–1]

11. Pointing out that those who have gone wrong are the object of compassion:

> Individual beings have been born, are being born, and will be born in various forms of life, and thus have come under the power of the stream of birth. [142]

Since they are born each through the power of karma, one speaks of "individual beings." The various births in the six forms of life are connected one after the other: (sentient beings) have been born previously, are being born now, and

will be born later. Since the continuity of births is uninterrupted, they have come under the power of birth.

> Through not understanding what the grasping of experience through thought ultimately is, one is deceived by this grasping. The stream of thought continues, and so there is no (opportunity) to turn away from deluded thought later on. [143]

Through not knowing what the grasping of experience through thought, which is one's "mind," ultimately is, by this mistaken grasping one deceives oneself. Since the stream of this mistaken grasping continues uninterruptedly, there will be no opportunity to understand what is genuinely real and turn away from this mistaken grasping. For example, since (this) is like a dream in which one is deceived by the dream (into thinking it is real), or like a magic show in which one is deceived by an illusion, it is said,

> The illusory beings who are deceived by illusions such as an illusory elephant, by those who are skilled in the art of illusion, also lose their dreamlike happiness, just as when one is deceived by a dream (into thinking it is real). Since those who have come under the power of dreams [144–5]
> Reject this path and look to other paths that are extreme, and teach (that) as what they call the "unerring path," they are fit for a compassionate (response). They are like those who say stone is gold.[52] The compassion of the compassionate ones (is spontaneous), their minds being conditioned by commiseration. [146–7]

Rejecting the path pointed out above and not able to (follow) the supreme, comprehensive approach as it is, (those who are deceived) have the flaw of falling into extreme and limited conceptions, (which lead to) various philosophical positions. Therefore, they see as the path what is other than the supreme, comprehensive approach and teach, "(this) is the unerring path." This is like those who say stone is gold. (The verse) has the meaning that they are fit for compassion, and

that commiseration arises spontaneously in the compassionate Noble Ones, because of their compassion. For example, the mind is agitated by a pleasing object and becoming caught up in (the thought of that object), one becomes powerless (to abandon it); thus one speaks of "thought or mind being conditioned by an object." Similarly the "mind" of the compassionate one is conditioned by compassion and one says, "conditioned by compassion in that commiseration spontaneously arises."

> These sentient beings who suffer because of the temporal circumstances and do not exercise (discernment) during these last 500 years of the teaching,[53]
> Have difficulty understanding the pure teaching, and going by mere words, do not (understand it) properly.
> [148–9]

Since they do not exercise their power of discernment, sentient beings suffer because of their temporal circumstances, (since they live) in the last 500 years of the teaching. (These beings) who think about the teaching, having difficulty in thoroughly grasping what the faultless, unerring teaching of the One Who Has Come Through refers to, go by and fix on the words of the teaching, but not their actual sense. What is referred to is like gold (hidden) in a dungeon; words are like a lamp. Although one seeks the gold that is being referred to by the lamp of the words, just as that lamp is not the gold, one should know that the words are not what they refer to. But, one takes the word as what it actually refers to, and

> The various points of view (that result) are confirmed according to each one's own capacity, etc. One is stirred up by this river of misunderstanding and separated from the yogic ambrosia that is the vital essence of the teaching.
> [150–1]

Those who proceed according to a confirmation based on the capacity of their deluded understanding, holding various perverse points of view, are thus agitated and carried away by the river of this lack of understanding. Therefore, they are separated from engaging in and developing the unerring yoga that is like ambrosia, what was really meant by the One Who Has Come Through.

12. Dedication for (the sake of creating) a foundation of positive qualities:

> Therefore, although this noble hidden dimension of primordial experiencing, the excellent path taught by the Victorious Ones,
> Is the extra-ordinary sphere of operation of the primordial experience of all the Victorious Ones, [152–3]

Since Mañjuśrīmitra's understanding is not the same as the total understanding of an Awakened One, the latter is extraordinary. Yet,

> I have validated it (for myself) by virtue of (long) experience and noncontradictory valid means of knowledge.
> [154]

The teacher, having accustomed himself for a long time to the real meaning, the hidden primordial experience of the Awakened Ones, has (here) set it forth according to the three valid means of knowledge: oral instruction, authoritative texts, and the power of meditation.[54]

> By composing this (work) on the excellent path of nonduality for the sake of sentient beings,
> May, in a single moment, in all the places of birth of sentient beings,
> Obstacles decrease and this primordial experience of all the Victorious Ones spread. [155–7]

By composing (this work) that briefly points out, for the sake of sentient beings, this excellent path of nonduality, (which is like) a trace left by the Awakened Ones of the three times, may (this) pure intention not be diminished by obstacles in all the temporal and spatial situations of all sentient beings. May this core of meaning, which has been taken to heart by all the Awakened Ones, increase and be thoroughly grasped by all sentient beings. This is the dedication.

Thus is completed *The Discussion under Twelve Headings* of the forty verses of *Cultivating the Primordial State of Pure and Total Presence*, written by Mañjuśrīmitra, the teacher from Sri Lanka, following the authoritative texts (of the Sems sde).

APPENDIX 2

The Topical Outline (*Sa bcad*) of the *Theg pa gcod pa'i 'khor lo*[1]

I. Gesture of Respect
- A. To the Awakened One who has actualized the three dimensions (of the Awakened State) 1
- B. To the Teaching which is the quieting of all mental fabrications 2
- C. To the Community, who are on the ten spiritual levels, (traversing) the five paths 3
- D. To the fundamental alikeness of these three, i.e., (the identity) of the knower and the known 4

II. The benefits of the primordial state of pure and total presence
- A. Benefit as Ground 5–8
- B. Benefit as Path 9
- C. Benefit as Goal 10–13
- D. Benefit of Total Freedom 14–17

III. Misunderstandings
- A. The four obstacles involved in the four types of misunderstanding 18–21
- B. The means of understanding
  - 1. According to the Mantrayāna 22
  - 2. A brief explanation of the means of understanding according to the philosophical approach (of the sutras) 27
- C. The misunderstandings themselves
  - 1. Misunderstanding due to logical analysis 23–26
  - 2. Misunderstanding of the primordial state by the sentient beings of the six realms 38–45
  - 3. Misunderstanding by the non-Buddhists 48–54
  - 4. Misunderstanding by the Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas 46–47, 55
  - 5. The error in general of these four 56–77

IV. Determination of philosophical views
- A Determination (of the view) of the Cittamātra

  - 1. Refutation of the (view) of ordinary sentient beings
    - a. What is to be refuted 28
    - b. The means of refutation
      - i. According to reason 29–37a
      - ii. According to textual authority 37b
  - 2. (Establishing) the position of the Cittamātra 58–67
- B. Determination of the viewpoint of the Sautrāntika-Madhyamaka
  - 1. The thesis of the Pratyekabuddhas and its refutation 68
  - 2. Establishing the position of the Sautrāntika-Madhyamaka 69–73
- C. Determination of the view of the Yogācāra-Madhyamaka
  - 1. Refutation of Cittamātra
    - a. Thesis (to be refuted) 74
    - b. Means of refutation 75–77
  - 2. Establishing the position of the Yogācāra-Madhyamaka
    - a. The arguments which indicate the viewpoint 78
    - b. The discursively formulated ultimate truth 86–88a
    - c. The non discursively formulated ultimate truth
      - i. In brief 88b
      - ii. Extensively
      - (a) Adherence to existence is not established 92
      - (b) Adherence to nonexistence is not established 93
      - (c) Adherence to even a middle is not established 94
    - d. In order to demonstrate the path 102–103
    - e. The goal 79
- D. Determination of the view of the Mahāyoga
  - 1. Refutation of the Madhyamaka
    - a. Regarding the goal 80–84
    - b. Regarding the viewpoint 89–91
    - c. Regarding the practice 104–107

THE TEXT

1. A basic device of Buddhist hermeneutics was the distinction between the Buddha's words which dealt with the real meaning and were definitive (*nges don, nītārtha*) and those which were provisional and had a particular intent behind them (*drang don, neyārtha*). On this see K. Lipman, "Nītārtha, Neyārtha and Tathāgatagarbha in Tibet," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 8 (1980), pp. 87–95, especially note 2.
2. On the ten spiritual levels, see *Jewel Ornament of Liberation*, chap. 19.
3. Ibid., p. 338.
4. In Tibetan, "youthful Mañjuśrī" is *'Jam dpal gzhon nu gyur pa* (Mañjuśrīkumārabhūta), a combination of "gentle Lord" and "youthful."
5. On the translation of *kāya*, see Preface.
6. The five eyes are those of flesh, of the gods, of discernment (*prajñā*), of the teaching (*dharma*), and of a Buddha. It is the eye of the gods that is able to see future births and deaths.
7. See Introduction, III, note 19.
8. *Vajrasattva* in Tibetan is a compound consisting of *rdo rje* (*vajra*), a symbol of indestructibility, and *sems dpa'* (*sattva*), one who is committed in his or her very being. *Sems dpa'* as a translation of *sattva* is a good example of the principles illustrated in the Preface.
9. See Introduction, III, note 11. In addition to these two well-known *tshad ma*, there is also a group of three used internally among the Buddhists themselves: *lung tshad ma*, authoritative scripture (*āgama*); *rig pa tshad ma*, authoritative experiential knowledge; and *man ngag tshad ma*, authoritative oral instruction (*upadeśa*) of the guru. See, for example, mDo sngags bstan pa'i nyi ma, *lTa grub shan 'byed gnad kyi sgron me yi tshig don rnam bshad 'jam dbyangs dgongs rgyan* (Delhi: mKhas btsun bzang po, 1973), f. 3a, and our translation, p. 113 above.
10. See Section 5 a.ii of our translation.
11. On *mthong lam* (*darśanamārga*), see above, Introduction, Section III, note 19.

12. The five senses and thought.
13. These are the subject matter of the fifth chapter of *The Jewel Ornament of Liberation*.
14. *skye mched* (*āyatana*), the six modes of awareness and their respective objects.
15. See Introduction, II.
16. *sems byung* (*caitta*), for which see, *Mind in Buddhist Psychology*.
17. See Introduction, II.
18. This traditional antidote to attachment is described in E. Conze, *Buddhist Meditation* (New York: Harper and Row, 1975), p. 103ff.
19. Six schools are traditionally enumerated in groups of two: Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, Sāṃkhya-Yoga, and Pūrva-Uttaramīmāṃsā (Uttaramīmāṃsā is another name for Vedānta). See S. Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, especially v. 1. The point here is that the *ālayavijñāna* is mistaken for an eternal self.
20. See Introduction, III, note 20.
21. Once again, the critique of Hinduistic thought is based on an experiential lack of understanding of the *ālayavijñāna*. The Madhyamaka, on the other hand, presents a logical critique of a creator, as in, for example, *Madhyamakālaṃkāra*, v. 2, of Śāntarakṣita (P. 5284, v. 101, 1-1-8):

    Since results are gradually produced, these entities which are said to be an eternal (cause) are not of a unitary nature.
    If results are each (produced) gradually (by a variety of causes), the eternality of these (causes) would be destroyed.

22. See above, note 15.
23. Cf. *Madhyamakālaṃkāra*, vv. 79–81 (P. 5289, v. 101, 2-2-4):

    Therefore, in the continuity of beginningless existence, we infer (the existence) of latent tendencies suitable
    To our conceptualizations: concrete entity, abstract entity, and so forth.
    These (concepts) do not arise through the power of concrete entities, since the latter are nonexistent;
    The absolute reality of these concrete entities has been extensively refuted (here).
    Since (what appears) comes about gradually, it is not purely fortuitous, and since neither does it come about all the time, it does not arise from an eternal cause.
    Therefore, on account of a similarity to our latent tendencies, a first (moment of a new experience) is born from that which is similar to itself.

24. On the distinction between pure and impure Buddha-fields, see E. Lamotte, tr., *L'Enseignement de Vimalakīrti* (Louvain: Institute Orientaliste, 1962), pp. 395–404.
25. Cf. E. Conze, *Buddhist Wisdom Books* (New York: Harper and Row,

1972), p. 63, for his translation of the Sanskrit. Our text differs slightly from the Tibetan translation of this *sūtra*, which I have utilized in correcting the text.

26. According to the *Theg pa gcod pa'i 'khor lo*, this line comes under the Mahāyoga refutation of the Madhyamaka. See below, Appendix 2, p. 129, and VGB, v. 5, p. 45. Usually, such a view is ascribed to the Yogācāra logicians who follow Dignāga and Dharmakīrti.
27. According to the *Theg gcod 'khor lo* (VGB, v. 5, p. 45), this refers to the *nirmāṇakāya*.
28. Existence, nonexistence, both, neither.
29. "Lord" is *dbang phyug* in Tibetan, a compound of *dbang*, "powerful," and *phyug*, "rich."
30. The objects of the five senses.
31. See above, note 19.
32. Much emphasis is placed in the *sems sde* on cultivating an awareness of three distinct states: absence of the movement of thoughts (*gnas pa*), especially in the first of the four yogas, *gnas pa'i rnal 'byor*; presence of the movement of thoughts (*'gyu ba*), especially in the second yoga, *mi g.yo ba'i rnal 'byor*; and the pure presence of awareness of these two (*rig pa*). See Introduction, III, note 3, and *phra khrid*.
33. See Introduction, III, note 10.
34. b.iii appears after b.iv, on p. 104.
35. See above, note 4.
36. *dmigs yul*.
37. *rnam par shes pa* (*vijñāna*), "awareness of a perceptible quality."
38. *Arhat* in Tibetan is *dgra bcom pa*, "one who has conquered the enemy," i.e., emotional conflicts.
39. See Introduction, III, note 17.
40. The two are *bsod nams kyi tshogs*, the accumulation of merit, and *ye shes kyi tshogs*, the accumulation of primordial knowledge. The former relates to the relative truth and the practice of compassion; the latter to the absolute truth and the experiential knowledge of openness.
41. On the thirty-seven, see Guenther, *Jewel Ornament of Liberation*, chap. 18; and *Kindly Bent to Ease Us*, Part I, appendix, pp. 341–344. On the ten *pāramitās*, see *Jewel Ornament of Liberation*, chap. 19.
42. On the eight *yon tan* (*guṇa*), see *Uttaratantraśāstra*, I, 5, J. Takasaki, tr., *A Study of the Ratnagotravibhāga* (Roma: ISMEO, 1966), p. 156ff.
43. See Introduction, I, p. 10.
44. See Introduction, I, note 32.
45. On these mudrās, see Introduction, I, note 31. The correlations here are between *sku* (*kāya*) and *phyag rgya chen po* (Mahāmudrā); *thugs* (*citta*) and *dam tshig gi phyag rgya* (*samāyāmudrā*); *phrin las* (karma) and *las kyi phyag rgya* (*karmamudrā*). Cf. Guenther, *Buddhist Philosophy in Theory and Practice*, p. 189. For a further discussion of *mudrā* in the context of *Mahāyoga*, see the principal *tantra* of the *sgyu 'phrul drwa ba* (*Māyājāla*) group, the *gSang ba'i snying po de kno na nyid nges pa* (Kaneko, n. 87), chap. 8.

46. The final correlation is betwen *gsung* (*vāc*) and *chos kyi phyag rgya* (*dharmamudrā*). Cf. Guenther, op. cit.
47. Cf. *bSam gtan mig sgron*, p. 194:

    If all configurations of events and meanings are not thoroughly grasped as the state of pure and total presence, which is the flash of knowing that gives awareness its quality, then it presents itself as the variety of concrete bodies and their sufferings. However, if thoroughly grasped, the flash of knowing presents itself as the symbolic encounters with primordial contact, primordial communication, and primordial experience.

48. Samantabhadra (*kun tu bzang po*), "positive in every way," is masculine, symbolizing skillfulness (*upāya*, *thabs*); while Samantabhadrī (*kun tu bzang mo*) is feminine, symbolizing discernment (*prajñā*, *shes rab*).
49. The Śrāvakas, although they represent the most limited form of approach to the Buddhist path, are still worthy objects of reverence for beings within the three worlds.
50. *rgyal ba rnam par snang mdzad*, the Buddha Vairocana; here the author is playing on the meaning of *Vairocana*.
51. *maṇḍala*, *dkyil 'khor*, for which see H. V. Guenther, *Matrix of Mystery* (Boulder: Shambhala Publications, 1984). The supreme commitments (*dam tshig*, *samāyā*) refer to those connected with *maṇḍala* practice, i.e., the Vajrayāna.
52. *rdo la gser bzhin*; this phrase is the source for the nickname of the text, *rDo la gser zhun*, "Gold Refined from ore."
53. This refers to the tradition that the teaching of Śākyamuni would decline in 500-year stages; see E. Obermiller, tr., *History of Buddhism by Bu-ston* (Tokyo: Suzuki Research Foundation, 1964), Reprint Series no. 5, p. 102ff.
54. See above, note 9.